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THE

SPANISH LETTER

OF

COLUMBUS

WRITTEN BY HIM ON FEB. 15, 1493

TO ANNOUNCE THE DISCOVERY

OF

AMERICA

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE FROM THE UNIQUE COPY
OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION

(*Barcelona, April*, 1493)

WITH A TRANSLATION AND
INTRODUCTION

LONDON
BERNARD QUARITCH
15 PICCADILLY
1893

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THE

SPANISH LETTER

OF

Christopher COLUMBUS

ca. 1451-1506

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TO

LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL

Escribano de Racion of the Kingdom of Aragon

DATED 15 FEBRUARY 1493

REPRINTED IN REDUCED FACSIMILE, AND TRANSLATED
FROM THE

UNIQUE COPY

OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION

(PRINTED BY JOHANN ROSENBACH AT BARCELONA
EARLY IN APRIL 1493)

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PREFACE.

"THE greatest event which has happened since the creation of the world (leaving aside the incarnation and death of Him who made it) is the discovery of the Indies." Thus said Lopez de Gomara, in dedicating his history to Charles V, three hundred and forty years ago. The eloquent Spaniard was, of course, unable to realise the full import of his words, which seem to have been touched with the spirit of prophecy. Even the centuries behind him contained facts which he did not know, and which are hardly understood in our own days. There is some ground for believing that certain parts of the North American continent were visited, eight hundred years back, by Norsemen sailing from Iceland and Greenland, but we have slender means of verifying the uncritical narratives in which the story is related. Nothing came of the achievement. It began and ended like a flash of lightning, leaving the Western horizon as dark as before. Systems of civilisation, not very unlike our own earlier developments, grew up, and flourished, and died (or survived) beyond the further shores of the Atlantic while Abelard, William of Ockham, Roger Bacon, and Albertus Magnus gave their powerful intellects to the discussion *de omni scibili*, and died unaware of the existence of the vast regions of the West. We must not, however, allow that the Middle Ages were so densely ignorant as many writers have asserted. Numberless surprises for modern students lie in the perusal of forgotten books, the contents of which lend peculiar force to the phrase of the Bible—"There is nothing new under the sun."

A work called the *Image dou Monde* (a different book from the *Imago Mundi* of Pierre d'Ailly) was written towards the middle of the thirteenth century, in which one of the subjects discussed, is the spherical form of the earth and the possibility of making

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its circuit. The conclusion arrived at, is a conditional negative: the feat, although possible,—the time being calculated at three years, and the circumference of the earth at twenty-two thousand miles—would not be practicable by reason of physical difficulties and the changes of climate.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the world was made acquainted, by Marco Polo, with lands beyond the ken of Ptolemy, and men who studied geography learned that an ocean bounded Asia on the East, as an ocean bounded Europe on the West. With this knowledge, a spirit of exploration was evoked which became incarnate, soon after the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Prince Henry of Portugal. The efforts of the Portuguese in that century, to reach and turn the southern limit of Africa, so as to win by sea a passage to the golden shores of India—lost since the time of Alexander the Great, save in the glimpses afforded by Arab merchants and by Marco Polo—stimulated so keenly the desire for geographical discovery, that its fascination has not yet become inoperative.

Under the influence of that spirit, a Genoese mariner whom we call Christopher Columbus, set his heart upon traversing the ocean which he imagined lay between Europe and Cathay, in order to find a Western passage to India, as the Portuguese were seeking the Eastern. His hopes were not realised, for he found what he had not sought; but his efforts were crowned with the achievement so enthusiastically lauded in the first sentence of this preface, when he discovered the West Indies on Thursday, October 11th, 1492.

One of the chapters of the *Historia de los Reyes Catolicos*, by Andres Bernaldez, a man acquainted personally with Columbus, begins as follows:—In the name of God Almighty. There was a man of Genoa, a dealer in printed books, trading in this land of Andalusia, whom they called Christoval de Colon, a man of very high intellect without much book-learning, very skilful in the art of Cosmography and of the divisions of the world; who perceived, by what he read in Ptolemy, and in other books, and by his own discernment, how and in what wise is formed the world into which we are born and in which we move. This he placed within the

sphere of the heavens, so that it touches them upon no side, nor has aught of firmness to rest upon, but is only earth and water globed by heat within the hollow vault of the sky. And he considered of the way by which regions of much gold might be found, and esteemed that this world and firmament of earth and water is wholly traversable in circuit, as John of Mandeville relates; and he who should have shipping at his need, and should be willing to hold on his course by sea and by land, would assuredly be able to pass by the West in a straight line from San Vicente, and return by Jerusalem to Rome and to Seville; which would be the girdling of the whole earth and round of the globe. And he made, by his wit, a Mapa-mundi, and studied much therein; and judged that from whatever part of the ocean he should begin his passage, he could not fail to meet land, and he deemed, because he saw this, that regions of much gold would be found. Glad with his notion, and knowing that the King Don John of Portugal took much delight in discovery, he repaired thither to win his inclinations; and narrating the import of his reflexions, no credit was yielded him, because the King of Portugal had very eminent and well-trained mariners who esteemed not Colon, and who assumed that in the world there were no greater discoverers than they. Whereupon Christoval Colon betook himself to the court of the King Don Fernando and the Queen Doña Isabel, and made to them a relation of his ideas, to which they likewise gave but little heed. And he discoursed with them, and said that he was sure of what he told them; and explained to them the Mapa-mundi, so that he made them long to know of those lands. Quitting him, they summoned wise astrologers and astronomers, and courtiers skilled in cosmography, from whom they took advice. And the opinion of most of them, upon hearing the discourse of Christoval Colon, was that he spoke truth; insomuch that the King and the Queen became strongly trustful in him, and ordered that three ships should be given him at Seville, manned and victualled for the time that he required; and sent him, in the name of God and of our Lady, forth to make discoveries.—

In this chapter of Bernaldez, who proceeds to narrate the

events of the voyage as told by Columbus himself in the document written to the sovereigns—that source being indicated by several passages in the text—there is no allusion to certain circumstances which must be supplied from the *Historia de las Indias* of Bartolomé de las Casas, who was likewise a friend of the Admiral. He states that the result of the conference with philosophers, cosmographers, and astrologers, was a flat contradiction of the project of Columbus, and that "all in one voice said that it was complete folly and vanity." Dismissed and disappointed, Columbus quitted Granada and took the road for Cordova in order to carry his schemes to the French court. Here we may go on in the words of Las Casas:—

Amongst other persons who gave him aid at court, and desired that his task should be fulfilled and promoted, was Luis de Santangel, the *Escribano de Raciones*. He was as much grieved and saddened by this second and final rejection, without any hope, as though he had personally suffered it in some matter little less than life itself. Seeing Cristobal Colon thus dismissed, and being unable to endure the damage and disparagement which he deemed the sovereigns would incur, by losing the great benefits and riches which Cristobal Colon promised, if his words came true, and by letting another Christian king obtain them; as well as the degradation of their royal authority—which was so much esteemed in the world—through the lack of spirit to venture so trifling a cost for a gain so infinite; he, trusting in God, and in his intimacy with the sovereigns, or their estimation of his fidelity and of the desire which they knew he had to serve them, went boldly to the Queen, and spoke to her thus. "Lady, the desire which I have ever had to serve the King my Lord, and your Highness, insomuch that if it were necessary I would die for your royal service—has constrained me to appear before your Highness, in order to speak upon a matter which is no concern of mine, and which I am aware lies outside of the duties or limits of my office . . . I have wondered much that your Highness did not accept an empire such as this Columbus has offered . . . this business is of such a quality that if what your Highness thinks difficult or impossible, should be proposed to another King

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and should prove successful, as this man says—and to any one who cares to understand, he gives good reasons for it—the result would be a manifest lessening of the credit of your Highness, and an injury to your kingdom. . . . Further, Lady, since what he asks for now is nothing but a million [of maravedis], and as it may be said that your Highness lets him go in order not to expend such an amount, this would indeed be of ill report; and it is in no wise fitting that your Highness should draw back from an enterprise so great, even though it were much more uncertain." The Catholic Queen, then, recognizing the good intention, and the zeal in her service, of Luis de Santangel, said that his desire was very pleasing to her, as well as his counsel, which she thought good to take, but that the matter must be deferred for a time until there should be more ease and leisure, as he could see in what straits they were already by reason of those wars which had been so protracted. "However, if it seem to you, Santangel," said the Queen, "that this man cannot brook any longer delay, I am willing to raise, upon my own private jewels, the money which he needs for fitting out his expedition, and arrangements therefor may immediately be set in course." Luis de Santangel went upon his knees, and kissed the hands of the Queen, in gratitude for the confidence in his judgment which she evinced by agreeing to an affair which was held so doubtful, and which every one opposed. And he added, "Most serene Lady, there is no need that, for this, your Highness's jewels should be pawned: it will be but a small service I shall render to your Highness, and to the King, my Lord, in lending the million from my own house, but let your Highness order Columbus to be sent for, who has, I believe, already gone." The Queen at once commanded that an officer of the court should post after Cristobal Colon, to say that she bade him return, and should bring him back. The alguacil found him two leagues from Granada, at the bridge of Pinos. Columbus returned with the officer, and was joyfully received by Santangel. When the Queen knew that he was come, she straightway gave order to the Secretary, Juan de Coloma, that he should with all speed apply himself to making out the letters of commission, and all such warrants as Columbus should think

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necessary and require for his whole voyage and discovery. . . . In conclusion, this work, so heroic and stupendous in its nature and vastness, had to be begun with the aid of a million (of maravedis) lent by a servant of the sovereigns, a man of no great wealth; whereas no eyes have seen, no ears have heard, no heart has imagined, anything like the treasures which have since then poured into Castile from the Indies, and been lavished away by the Kings of Castile.—So far Las Casas.

Furnished with his commission, Columbus started for Palos, and there entered into negociations to obtain the services of the three brothers Pinzon, rich and renowned mariners. The million lent by Santangel proved insufficient for the purpose in view, and Martin Alonso Pinzon advanced another half-million to the new Admiral; with which Columbus was enabled to complete all his arrangements. Three caravels were fitted out. In the Capitana, Columbus himself took the command with forty men; Martin Alonso Pinzon went as commander, with his brother Francisco as captain, in the Pinta, the fastest sailer of the three; and Vicente Yañez Pinzon sailed in the Nina.

Early in the morning of the 3rd August, 1492, they weighed anchor and started from the little island of Saltes, opposite Huelva, in the port of Palos; and early in the morning of Friday, the 12th October, they sighted Guanahani, which is generally considered identical with Watling Island in the Bahamas. The voyage had thus occupied seventy-one days; and the statement in Columbus' printed letter that it was thirty-three days is usually supposed to be a blunder. Such is not the case. He reckoned only from the time of quitting the known outposts of Christendom, and his calculation of thirty-three days began when his ships, lying becalmed on the 7th September between Teneriffe and Gomera in the Canary Islands, were enabled to start on the following day with a N.E. wind, which bore them out into the ocean. Thus twenty-two days of September and eleven of October constituted what he regarded as the duration of his passage from land to land, from Christendom to the Indies.

All the circumstances of the voyage are familiar to the world. The chief authority is Columbus' own diary carefully written day

by day in the form of a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. The original has long disappeared, but Las Casas, about 1520, made an abridged copy of it, occasionally giving the exact text, when he considered it impressive. This transcript still exists, and was published by Navarrete in 1825 (Coleccion, Tomo I). We also find it embodied in the *Historia de las Indias* of Las Casas, a great and invaluable work printed for the first time in 1875. Clear evidence is afforded by an examination of the text that Columbus never failed in the duty of writing his daily record, notwithstanding all the mental and physical difficulties that encompassed his enterprise. Under such circumstances, it is easy to account for the blanks that occur here and there in the transcript made by Las Casas. The handwriting of the great Genoese, at the most favourable moments, was not very clear, as we can see by the facsimiles of holograph letters in the *Cartas de Indias*. What it must have been on ship-board in a boisterous ocean, we may imagine from the errors which appear in the various printed texts of the letter now republished, which we give in a reduced facsimile from the recently discovered unique copy of the first impression. That letter seems to have originated in the following manner.

On the return of Columbus, a terrible storm arose when he was approaching the Azores. From the night of the 12th February, until after sundown on the 14th, he was driven and tossed about under bare poles, with constant expectation of shipwreck. Fearing that the sovereigns would never learn the extent of his services, and dreading that his boys at Cordova would be left beggars in a strange land, the orphans of a discredited foreigner, he resolved to commit his story to the seas. He took a sheet of parchment and traced upon it as much as he could write about his great discovery; then wrapping it in a piece of cloth, well secured, he placed it in a barrel which was flung into the ocean. From the state of the sea, and the words "todo lo que pudo," we may conclude that the account was a very brief one, and would have been well-nigh illegible if it had ever reached the sovereigns to whom it was addressed. It is said by Ferdinand Columbus that he wrote the same letter in duplicate, and placed the second copy in another barrel, which was retained on board

to await the moment of the ship's dissolution; but this statement is not found in Las Casas, and is probably a distortion of the fact that Columbus wrote the two letters about to be referred to. We may confidently assert that, under the circumstances, Columbus could hardly have managed to write more than a few lines; and that consequently the barrel-letter need not be confounded with any extant piece of his composition. It is, however, very likely that the experience of the 14th of February would have set him thinking in regard to the desirability of multiplying the record of his voyage. From Wednesday morning (the 13th) till the night of Sunday (the 17th) he was unable to take any repose, and it was probably during the hours of night, when all active attention to the business of navigation was necessarily interrupted, that he applied himself to writing that compendium of his diary which we know as the letter of Columbus. However rapidly he might write, such a piece of work, regarded even as a transcript, must have occupied nine or ten hours at least, probably more. The likelihood is, that the night of the 14th and the morning of the 15th were given to the writing of the Carta al Escribano de Racion—our present letter; and that on the 17th and 18th, when the sea was a little calmer, he made or caused to be made a transcript or second copy of it, which he addressed to the Treasurer Sanchez. The latter was, as a matter of course, more neatly and correctly written than the former: the violence of the storm had abated, and there was more leisure to improve the roughness of the original, as well as avoid its defects. This is easily observable in comparing the text of the Sanchez letter, as printed for the first time by Varnhagen in 1858, with that of the present reproduction. Although, however, the fair copy of an author's draught composition is usually superior to its original, yet the Sanchez letter has not entirely escaped the fate of most copies; for there are some small matters, which have been pointed out elsewhere, in which its text is inferior to the other. Among the typographical blunders in our Santangel first edition, one small error may be particularised as showing that it followed an ill-written original. Columbus makes a statement twice—once near the beginning, and once near the end—that his outward voyage

(from the Canaries) had occupied thirty-three days. In our facsimile it will be seen that the printer blundered; and gave in the first instance "ueinte," in the second "xxxiii." The cause of the error (which was corrected in the [Naples?] reprint preserved in the Ambrosian library at Milan) is easily traceable. If we examine the writing of Roman numerals by Columbus in the facsimiles given in the *Cartas de Indias*, we see at once that Columbus must have used "xxxiii." in the first place, and perhaps written the number in words in the second place. In his writing, "xxxiii." would, to inexpert eyes, look like "veynt," and was so read by the printer. This can easily be tested by any one who chooses to examine the facsimiles of the writing of Columbus, and takes the trouble to imitate his method of forming the numerals in question.

The words which express the date of the Santangel letter show that on the 15th February Columbus thought himself close to one of the Canary Islands; on the 17th he discovered that the land he saw was Santa Maria in the Azores, and he specified the fact correctly in dating the Sanchez letter on the 18th, when he was anchored close to the island and had sent a boat ashore. The weather continued very bad, with occasional mitigations, till the 22nd when an improvement set in. In the evening of the 23rd, he set sail for Spain. On the night of March 2nd, his vessel was again in great danger not far from the coast outside Lisbon; on the night of March 3rd a still more terrible storm arose in which nearly all hope of safety was abandoned; and on the morning of the 4th, he succeeded, much to the wonder of himself and the inhabitants of the coast, in entering the mouth of the Tagus. He then wrote to the King of Portugal, asking permission to enter Lisbon. On the 8th he had a letter from the King, who was at Paraiso, nine leagues away, requesting his presence there. He was received with much courtesy by the monarch, notwithstanding the ill-will of the Portuguese officials who had already begun to show hostility. On the 11th he took leave of the King, on the 12th he decided not to make his way by land to Castile, notwithstanding the proffer of facilities from Dom João; and returned that night to his ship. At 8 o'clock on the following morning,

he set sail towards Seville, and early on the 15th he crossed the bar of Saltes and entered the port of Palos. According to his own statement the return voyage had occupied twenty-eight days; in which calculation he included only the space of time between the 18th or 19th January, when he knew that he was in the vicinity of Matinino, and the 16th February, when he found himself close to the Azores. From the latter date onwards, his progress was a stormy and dangerous one, and cost him twenty-three days (as he calculates) beating about "this sea." His reckoning is evidently meant to comprise the time from the 18th of February when he had anchored in the Azores to the 13th of March when he quitted Lisbon for Palos. It had been his intention to write to Ferdinand and Isabella from Lisbon (adonde acordé escrivir a sus Altezas) and we have no proof that he did not send some message announcing his return. But it is very improbable that he did so, when we know that he changed his mind on the subject of accepting Dom João's aid in travelling by land to Castile, and that he was prudently distrustful of his Portuguese friends. It is quite certain that he did not send off the Santangel letter till he reached Seville, since its postscript is dated March 14th. *A fortiori*, he would assuredly not have sent his important journal-letter to the sovereigns; and it is not likely, since he deferred the transmission of the Santangel epistle, that he would have risked the despatch of the improved copy of it which he had addressed to Sanchez. We have, besides, a reason in the date affixed to the Latin version of the latter, for supposing that it was still in his hands on March 14th.

With regard to the persons to whom Columbus addressed his compendious Letter, we have already seen good reason why his friend Luis de Santangel should have been considered a worthy recipient. As for Gabriel Sanchez, the Treasurer of Aragon, it must have been his official position which prompted the navigator to send him the second copy, or fair transcript. His good-will was a matter of no small moment to Columbus in connexion with he expected "muy poquita ayuda que sus Altezas me daran." His rank as a royal minister was higher than that of Santangel, and his power to influence the King greater. Santangel had

already been a successful intermediary with the Queen; Sanchez might be won over to perform an equally useful office with the King. However well-disposed Isabella might be, however large her independence in dealing with the states of Castile, Ferdinand was, after all, the real arbiter in their united councils. That Sanchez was personally a stranger to Columbus, and a man with whom he wished to ingratiate himself, would have been a reason for addressing to him the fair copy, more carefully transcribed than the original written three days earlier and addressed to Santangel. Hence we find that the Sanchez text is better than the other, but in a few instances the Santangel letter is decidedly superior.

As already shown, the primary existing authority, in point of fulness and detail, for the history of the first voyage of Columbus, is his own Diary, in so far as it was partly transcribed and partly abridged by Las Casas. But this transcript was never published until 1825, although Herrera and others made use of it in the sixteenth century. The primary authority, in point of publication to the world, is the Santangel letter written by Columbus on the 15th of February, 1493, printed, as we have reason to conclude, in the April of that year at Barcelona, and here published in reduced facsimile. The place of secondary authority must be assigned to the Sanchez letter (written by Columbus on the 18th of February, 1493), not in its original form—since the Spanish text was printed for the first time in 1858—but in the Latin version which appeared in 1493, and which was frequently reprinted and translated afterwards. Although the Santangel letter had been twice printed,—in its *princeps* state at Barcelona, and in a second edition elsewhere (of which the Ambrosian quarto is the only extant specimen)—before the publication of the Sanchez letter in Latin; those two editions must have been carefully suppressed by authority. Otherwise we could not account for the singular fact that no allusion is made to them by any of the writers of the sixteenth century, and that their very existence was unknown till the second edition was discovered about thirty years ago in the Ambrosian library at Milan, and the first was found three years ago in Spain. There is no date of impression or printer's name upon

either; but the type of the Spanish folio is that which was used by Johann Rosenbach at Barcelona in 1493-94. The Spanish quarto is evidently later, as is shown by various technical peculiarities of correction and error; but they both naturally preceded the editions of the Latin translation which was printed out of Spain—as was also indeed the Spanish quarto. The Spanish scholar Asensio, in a book upon Columbus published in 1891, asserts that the Ambrosian quarto emanated from a Seville press, and concludes that it was printed there when the discoverer had reached that city on his way from Palos to Barcelona. He forgets that Columbus was not a professional author, and that nothing would have induced him to put the letter in type before it had been delivered to the gentleman to whom it was addressed. It was a private communication, and can only have been given to the press by Santangel or one of his intimate friends then in attendance on the King and Queen at Barcelona. If the Ambrosian quarto was really printed at Seville, it must have been some weeks later than the Barcelona impression. But internal evidence shews that the quarto was printed in Italy, there being numerous instances of the substitution of the initial *j* in words requiring *i* or *y*. The Spaniards frequently used *i* for *j*, but never in any case converted an initial *i* into *j*, the two letters being differently sounded in Spain while in Italy they were homophonous.

During the last three or four years certain quartos (three in number) have made their appearance in the world, produced by typography, and purporting to be fifteenth century editions of the Spanish text. There is, however, no appearance of antiquity about them, and they are evidently clumsy attempts to reproduce the Ambrosian quarto with sufficient inexactness to pass as variant editions.

It is frequently asserted that Columbus never learned that Cuba was an island, or anything other than the coast of Cathay. But the statement made in this letter (on the 19th and 20th lines of the facsimile), shows clearly enough that he had heard and believed it to be an island, as his Indian prisoners had informed him.

SEÑOR porque se que aureis plazer dela grand vitoria que nuestro señor me ha dado en mi viage vos escrino esta por la q̃l sabreys como en quinze dias pasé las islas cõ la armada q̃ los illustrissimos Rey e Reyna nuestros señores me dieron pode yo falle muy muchas Islas pobladas cõ gente sin numero: y dellas todas he tomado posesion por sus altezas con pregon y vanderas reales estendidas y non resistido cõtradicho A la primera q̃ yo falle puse nombre sant saluador a conmemoracion desu alta magestat el qual marauillosamente todo esto ha dado los indios la llaman guanahani A la segũda puse nombre la isla de santa maria de concepcion ala tercera fernandina ala quarta la isla bella ala quinta la Isla Juana e assi a cada vna nombre nueuo Quando yo llegue ala Juana segui io la costa della al poniente y la falle tan grande q̃ pense que seria tierra firme la prouincia de catayo y como no falle assi villas y lugares cerca la costa dela mar saluo pequeñas poblaciones con la gente delas q̃les no podia hauer habla por que luego fuyan todos: andaua yo a delante por el dicho camino pensando deuo ver grãdes Ciudades o villas y al cabo de muchas leguas visto q̃ no hauia inouacion ni que la costa me leuaua a setentrion de adõde mi voluntad era cõtraria porq̃ el yuierno era ya ẽcarnado yo tenia proposito de hazer del al austro y tambiẽ el viento medio adelãte determine de no aguardar otro tiẽpo y boluí atras fasta vn señalado puerto de adõde ẽbie dos hõbres por la tierra para saber si hauia Rey o grãdes Ciudades adonde ẽcõ tres iornadas hallaron infinitas poblaciões pequeñas y gẽte sin numero mas no cosa de regimiẽto por lo qual se bolui nueuo yo entendia harto de otros idios q̃ ya tenia tomados como continuamẽte esta tierra era Jsla e assi segui la costa della al oriẽte ciento y siete leguas fasta dõde fazia fin: del qual cabo vi otra Jsla al oriẽte distincta de esta diez o ocho leguas ala qual luego puse nombre la spañola y fui alli y segui la parte del setentrion assi como dela mana al oriente. clxxviii grãdes leguas por linea recta del oriẽte assi como dela iuana la qual y todas las otras son fortissimas en demasiado grado y esta en estremo en ella ay muchos puertos en la costa dela mar sin cõparacion de otros q̃ yo sepa en cristianos y fartos rios y buenos y grandes q̃ es marauilla las tierras della son altas y en ella muy muchas sierras y mõtañas altissimas sin cõparacion de la isla de çeyre fretodas fermosissimas de mil fechuras y todas ãdables y llenas de arboles de mil maneras y altas y parecen q̃ llegã al cielo y tengo por dicho q̃ nunca pierden la foia segun lo puede cõphẽder q̃ los vi tã verdes y tã bermosos como son por mayo en españa y dellos stauã floridos dellos cõ fruto y dellos en otra termino segũ es su calidad y cõforme el rui señor y otros pares cos de mil maneras en el mes de nouiembre por alli dõde yo ãdaua ay palmas de seys o ocho maneras q̃ es admiracion verlas por la diformidad fermosa dellas mas assi como los otros arboles y frutos e yerbas en ella ay pinares en maraui lla hay campiñas grandissimas hay miel y de muchas maneras de aues y frutas muy diuersas en las tierras ay muchas minas de metales hay gẽte infinita abundante numero La spañola es marauilla la sierras y las mõtañas y las vegas y las campiñas y las tierras tan fermosas y gruesas para plantar y sembrar pacer ganados de todas sortes para edificios de villas y lugares los puertos dela mar aqui no hauia dencia sin vista y dellos rios muchos y grandes y buenas aguas los mas de los quales traen oro en ellos arboles y frutos e yerbas ay grandes differencias de aquellas dela mana en esta ay muchas sierras y grandes montañas de oro y de otros metales La gente desta y las todas las otras q̃ he fallado y habido: mayor habido noticia andan todos desnudos hombres y mugeres assi como sus madres los pare hasta que algunas mugeres se cobrian vn solo lugar cõ vna foia de yerua o vna cosa de algodõ que para ello fazen ellos no tienen ficho ni acero ni armas ni son ydos no por que no sea gente bien dispuesta y de fermosa estatura saluo que son muy temerosos marauilla no tienẽ otras armas saluo las cañas quando van a la guerra con la grande cõla fruta de la qual ponen al cabo vn pescado agudo e otras assi de aquellas que no tienen hierro muchos dellos osan yr a cient e cient e embian a otra dos otros hombres alguna vez a pelear con todo el mundo

si nu nero: y despues q̃ los veyã llegar huyan a no aguardar padre a hijo y esto no por que a nĩ guno se aya hecho mal antes a todo cabo adõde yo aya estado y podido hauer fabla les beua do de todo loque tenia asi paño como otras cosas muchas si recebir por ello cosa alguna mas sõ asi temerosos sin remedio: verdad es que despues que aseguran y pierde este miedo ellos son tanto si engaño y tan liberales delo q̃ tienẽ que no lo creerian sino el q̃lo viese: ellos de cosa que tẽgan pidẽdo gela iamas dize deno antes cõuidan la psona cõ ello y muestran tãto amor que darian los corazones y quierẽ sea cosa dqualor quien sea de poco ẽ precio luego por qual quie ra cosica de qual quiera manera que sea q̃ sele de por ello sea cõtentos: yo defendi q̃ no seles di esen cosas tan sinples como pedaços de escudillas rotas y pedaços de vidrio roto y cabos de vagu getas: haũ que quãdo ellos esto podia llegar los parescia hauer la mejor joya del mũdo. que se acerto hauer vn marinero por vna agugeta de oro de peso de dos castellanos y medio: y otros de otras cosas q̃ muy mucho valia mucho mas ya por blãcas nuevas dauan por ellas todo quanto tenian haũ que fuese dos ni tres castellanos de oro o vna arroua o dos de algodõ fila do hasta los pedaços de los arcos rotos de las pipas tomauan y dauan lo q̃ tenian como bes tias asi que me parecio mal: yo lo defendi y dania yo gracioso mil cosas buenas q yo sentaua por que tomen amor y allẽde esto se farã cristianos que seiclinan al amor de nuestro señor de sus altezas y de toda la nació castellana: e procurã de aiũtar de nos dar delas cosas que tenẽ en abundã cia que nos sõ necessarias y no conocian ninguna secta ni idolatria salvo que todos creen q̃ las fuerças y el bien es en el cielo y creian muy firme que yo cõ estos naujos y gente venia del cielo y con tal catamiento me recebian en todo cabo despues de auer perdido el miedo y esto no procede por q̃ sean ignorantes salvo de muy sotil ingenio y õbres que nauegan todas aquellas mares que es maravilla la buena cuenta que dan de todo salvo por que nunca vieron gẽte vestida ni semejan tes navios y luego que lege alas islas de la primera isla q̃ halle tome por força algunos de ellos pa ra que aprendiesen y me diese noticia de lo que auia en aquellas partes casi fue que luego estendiero y nos a ellos quando por lengua o señas: y estos han aprouechado mucho oy en dia los traigo q̃ siẽpre está de proposito q̃ vẽgo del cielo por mucha cõversasiõ q̃ ayan hauido cõmigo y estos eran los primeros a pronunciarlo adonde yo llegaua y los otros andauan corriendo de casa ẽ casa y a las villas cercanas cõ bozes altas venit: venit auer la gente del cielo asi todos hõbres como mugeres despues de hauer el corazõ seguro de nos venia q̃ nõ cada uno grande ni pequeño y todos trayan algu de comer y de beuer que dauan cõ vn amor maravilloso ellos tienẽ todas las islas muy muchas canoas a manera de fustes de remo de las mayores de las menores y al gunas: y muchas sõ mayores que hãa fusta de diez ocho bancos: no sõ tan anchas porque sõ de hun solo madero mas buna fusta no terna cõ ellas al remo porque van mucho es cosa de ver er y cõ estas navegan todas aquellas islas q̃ sõ innumerables: y trate sus mercaderias: algunas destas canoas he visto cõ lxx y lxxx õbres en ella y cada uno cõ su remo en todas estas islas no vide mucha diuersidad de la fechura de la gente ni en las costumbres ni en la lengua: salvo que todos se entienden q̃ es cosa muy sigular para lo que espero q̃ determinaran sus altezas para la cõuersaciõ de ellos de nuestra santa fe a la qual sõ muy dispuestos: ya dixe como yo auia andado c. vii leguas por la costa de la mar por la derecha liña de occidẽte a oriente por la isla huana segũ d qual cierto no puedo decir que esta mas esmaior que inglaterra y escocia juntas por que allẽde de estas c vii. leguas me queda a de la parte de ponient e dos provincias que no he andado: la una de las q̃les llaman auan: ansi de nasẽ la gẽte cõ cola las q̃les provincias no pueden tener en longura menos de. l. o. lx. leguas segun puede entender destos indios q̃ yo tengo los q̃les saben todo s las islas esta otra española en derecho tiene mas que la españa toda desde colunya por costa de mar hasta finisterrania en galizia pues en vna quadra andouue. dxxvii grãos leguas por rec ta li[illegible] de occidente a oriente esta es para desear: e v[illegible] es para nunca dexar en la qual pue sto [illegible] a possessiõ por sus altezas y todas sean mas abastadas de lo que yo [illegible] todos las tengo por sus altezas que de ellas [illegible]

se y puedo dezir y todas las tengo por de sus altezas qual dellas pueden disponer como y tanto plenariamente como delos Reynos de castilla en esta española en ellugar mas conuenible y mejor comarca para las minas del oro y de todo trato assi de la tierra firme de aqua como de aquella de alla del gran can a donde baura grand trato e ganancia de tomar o possessio de vna villa grande de alla qual puse nombre la villa de nauidad: en ella hize fuerza y fortaleza que ya a estas oras estara del todo acabada y bien armada de artillerias e vituallas por mas de vn año y fusta y maestro de la mar en todas artes para fazer otras y grandes amistad con el Rey de aquella tierra en tanto grado que se precaua de me llamar y tener por hermano e hauia que le mudase la voluntad a hostender esta gente el mios suios no sabe que sean armas y andan desnudos como ya he dicho so los mas temerosos que ay en el mundo assi que solamente la gente que alla queda es para destruir toda aquella tierra y es ysla sin peligro de sus personas sabiendo escoger entre todas estas islas me parece que todos los obres sean contentos con vna muger y assi maioral o Rey dan hasta veynte: las mugeres me parece que trabaxan mas que los obres vi bien poco en tender si tienen bienes propios que me parecio ver que aquello que vno tenia todos hazian parte en especial delas cosas comestibles en estas islas hasta aqui no he hallado obres mostruos como muchos pensauan mas antes esta gente muy limpio acatamiento assi en sus negocios como en guinea saluo con sus cabellos corredios y no se crian adonde ay gran peto demasiado delos rayos solares es verdad que se tiene gran fuerca puesto que esta distinta dela linia equinocial veite y seis grades en estas islas adonde ay motinas grandes: ay tenia a fuerca el frio este yuierno: mas ellos lo sufren por la costumbre que con la ayuda delas viandas comen con especias muchas y muy calientes en demasia: assi que mostruos no he hallado ni noticia saluo de vna ysla que es aqui en la segunda ala entrada delas yndias que es poblada de vna gente que tiene en todas las yslas por muy fuertes los quales comen carne vmana destos tienen muchas canaus con las quales corren todas las yslas de india roban y toman quanto pueden ellos no son mas disformes que los otros saluo que tienen encostumbre de traer los cabellos largos como mugeres y usan arcos y flechas delas mismas armas de cañas con vn palillo al cabo por defecto de fierro que no tienen son fuertes entre estos otros pueblos que son de demasiado grado cuardes mas yo no los tengo en nada mas que alos otros destos son aquellos que trata con las mugeres de mar en mo que es la prima ysla partiendo de españa para las indias que se halla en la qual no ay hombre ninguno: ellas no usan exercio femenil saluo arcos y flechas como los sobre dichos de cañas y se arman y cobigan con launes de arambre de que tiene mucho otra ysla me seguran mayor que la española en que las personas no tienen ningun cabello. En esta ay oro sin cuento y destas y delas otras traigo comigo indios para testimonio: e con licencia de hablar desto solamente que sea fecho este viage que fue si de corrida que puede ver sus altezas yo les dare oro quanto ouieren menester con muy poquita ayuda que sus altezas me dara agora especial y algo de quanto sus altezas mandara cargar y almastigo quanta mandaran cargar e dela qual hasta oy no se ha hallado saluo en gracia en esta ysla de xpo y el señorio la vende como quiere y higuera de aloe quanto mandaran cargar y esclauos quantos mandaran cargar e seran: delos y de lantes y creo hauer hallado ruybarbo. y canela e otras mil cosas de distancia hallaze que hauran hallado la gente que yo alla dexo porque yo no me he detenido ningun cabo en quanto dineros me aia dado lugar: deua negar solamente en la villa de nauidad en quanto dexe asegurado. Y bien asegurado. Y a la verdad mucho mas ficera si los nauios me fuxieran como razon demandan. Esto es harto y eterno dios nuestro señor el qual da a todos aquellos que andan en camino victoria de cosas que parecen imposibles: y esta señalada mente fuela vna por que bien que otras tierras auia hallado. Y escripto todo va por con lectura sin allegar de vista saluo comprendiendo a tanto que los oyentes los mas creyan e juzgauan mas por fabla que por escripto. Dello assi que pues nuestro: Redemptor dio esta victoria a nuestros Illustrissimos rey: reyna casi reynos Famosos de tan alta cosa. El de donde toda

La christiandad deue tomar alegria y fazer grandes fiestas y dar gracias solẽnes ala sancta tri nidad cõ muchas oraciones solẽnes por el tanto en ensalcamiento que hauran en tornando se tantos pueblos a nuestra sancta fe: y despues por los bienes tẽporales q̃ no solamẽte ala españa mas atodos los christianos terna aqui refrigerio y ganancia esto segun el fecho a si embreue fecha enla calaueta sobre las yslas de canaria a xv de febrero año Mil. cccclxxxxiij.

Para lo que mandareys El Almirãte

Anima que venia dentro en la Carta.

Despues desta escripto: y estãdo en mar de. Castilla salio tanto viẽto cõ migo. sul y sueste que me ha fecho descargar los nauios por cosa aqui en este puerto de lisbona oy que fue la mayor marauilla del mundo adõde acorde escriuir a sus altezas. en todas las yndias de siempre halla do y los tẽporales como en mayo adõde yo fuy en xxxiiij dias y volui en xv viij salvo que tres tormen tas me han tenido xxiij dias corriendo por esta mar: dizen aqua todos los hõbres de la marina mas ouo tan mal yuierno no ni tantas perdidas de naues fecha ha quatorze dias de marzo:

ESTA Carta en bio Colom Al escriuano De racio De las Yslas Halladas en Las Yndias: Lo cual a B. Ora De Sus Altezas

CARTA

DE

CRISTOVAL COLON

AL ESCRIBANO DE RACION

LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL

(*With the obvious typographical errors corrected.*)

Señor,

Porque sé que avreis plazer de la grand vitoria que nuestro Señor me ha dado en mi viaje, vos escrivo esta por laqual sabreys como en xxxiii dias pasé á las Indias (con la armada que los illustrissimos Rey e Reyna nuestros Señores me dieron) donde yo fallé muy muchas islas pobladas con gente sin numero; y dellas todas he tomado posesion por sus Altezas con pregon, y vandera rreal estendida, y non me fue contradicho. A la primera que yo fallé, puse nombre Sant Salvador á comemoracion de Su alta Magestad El qual maravillosamente todo esto ha dado: los Indios la llaman Guanahanî. A la segunda puse nombre La Isla de Santa Maria de Concepcion; á la tercera, Fernandina; á la quarta La Isabela; á la quinta La Isla Juana; e asi á cada una nombre nuevo. Quando yo llegué á la Juana, segui yo la costa della al Poniente, y la fallé tan grande que pensé que seria Tierra firme, la provincia de Catayo; y como no fallé asi villas y lugares en la costa de la mar, salvo pequeñas poblaciones con la gente de las quales no podia haver fabla porque luego fuyan todos,—andava yo adelante por el dicho camino, pensando de no errar grandes ciudades ó villas; y al cabo de muchas leguas, visto que no havia inovacion, i que la costa me levava al Setentrion, de donde mi voluntad era contraria porque el invierno era ya encarando, yo

tenia proposito de hazer dél al Austro; y tanbien el viento me dió adelante. Determiné de no aguardar otro tiempo, y volvi atrás fasta un señalado puerto, de donde enbié dos hombres por la tierra para saber si havia Rey o grandes ciudades. Andovieron tres jornadas, y hallaron infinitas poblaciones pequeñas i gente sin numero, mas no cosa de regimiento; por lo qual se bolvieron. Yo entendia harto de otros Indios que ya tenia tomados, como continuamente esta tierra era isla; e asi segui la costa della al Oriente ciento i siete leguas fasta donde fazia fin; del qual cabo, vi otra isla al Oriente, distincta de esta diez y ocho leguas á la qual luego puse nombre La Española. Y fui alli, y segui la parte del Setentrion, asicomo de la Juana, al Oriente, clxxxviii grandes leguas, por linea recta del Oriente, asicomo de la Juana; la qual y todas las otras son fertilisimas en demasiado grado, y esta en estremo. En ella, ay muchos puertos en la costa de la mar, sin comparacion de otros que yo sepa en Cristianos, y fartos rrios, y buenos y grandes, que es maravilla. Las tierras della son altas, y en ella muy muchas sierras y montañas altissimas sin comparacion de la Isla de Tenerife; todas fermosissimas de mil fechuras, y todas andables y llenas de arboles de mil maneras i altas, i parecen que llegan al cielo. I tengo por dicho que jamás pierden la foja, segun lo puedo comprehender que los vi tan verdes i tan hermosos, como son por Mayo en España. Y dellos estavan floridos, dellos con fruto, i dellos en otro termino segun es su calidad; i cantava el ruiseñor i otros paxaritos de mil maneras, en el mes de Noviembre, por alli donde yo andava. Ay palmas de seis o de ocho maneras, que es admiracion verlas por la diformidad fermosa dellas; mas asicomo los otros arboles y frutos e yervas. En ella ay pinares á maravilla, e hay campiñas grandissimas, y ay miel, i de muchas maneras de aves, y frutas muy diversas. En las tierras ay muchas minas de metales, e ay gente inestimable numero. La Española es maravilla: las sierras y las montañas y las vegas, i las campiñas, y las tierras tan fermosas y gruesas para plantar y senbrar, para criar ganados de todas suertes, para hedificios de villas e lugares. Los puertos de la mar aqui no havria crehencia sin vista, y de los rios muchos y grandes, y buenas aguas, los mas de los quales traen oro. En los

arboles y frutos e yervas, ay grandes differencias de aquellas de la Juana. En esta ay muchas especierias, y grandes minas de oro y de otros metales. La gente desta ysla y de todas las otras que he fallado, y havido (ni aya havido) noticia, andan todos desnudos, honbres y mugeres, asi como sus madres los paren, haunque algunas mugeres se cobijan un solo lugar con una foja de yerva, o una cosa de algodon que para ello fazen. Ellos no tienen fierro ni azero ni armas ni so[n par]a ello, no porque no sea gente bien dispuesta y de fermosa estatura salvo que son muy te[merosos] á maravilla. No tienen otras armas, salvo las a[rm]as de las cañas quando est[an] con la simiente á [la] qual ponen al cabo un palillo agudo, e no osan usar de aquellas: que m[uchas] vezes me [ha aca]escido embiar á tierra dos o tres hombres á alguna villa para haver fabl[a, y] salir á [ellos dellos] sin numero; y despues que los veyan llegar, fuyan á no aguardar padre á hijo. Y esto no porque á ninguno se aya hecho mal, antes á todo cabo á donde yo aya estado y podido haver fabla, les he dado de todo lo que tenia, asi paño como otras cosas muchas, sin recebir por ello cosa alguna; mas son asi temerosos sin remedio. Verdad es, que despues que aseguran, y pierden este miedo, ellos son tanto sin engaño y tan liberales de lo que tienen, que no lo creerian sino él que lo viese. Ellos de cosa que tengan, pidiendosela, jamás dizen de nó; antes convidan la persona con ello, y muestran tanto amor que darian los corazones; y quier sea cosa de valor, quier sea de poco precio, luego por qualquiera cosica, de qualquiera manera que sea, que seles dé por ello, sean contentos. Yo defendi que no seles diesen cosas tan ceviles como pedazos de escudillas rotas, y pedazas de vidrio roto, y cabos de agugetas—haunque quando ellos esto podian llegar, les parescia haver la mejor joya del mundo. Que se acertó haver un marinero por una agugeta de oro de peso de dos castellanos y medio; y otros, de otras cosas que muy menos valian, mucho mas. Ya, por blancas nuevas, davan por ellas todo quanto tenian, haunque fuesen dos ni tres castellanos de oro, o una arrova o dos de algodon filado. Fasta los pedazos de los arcos rotos de las pipas tomavan, y davan lo que tenian, como bestias; asi que me pareció mal. Yo lo defendí, y dava yo graciosas mil cosas buenas que yo levava, porque tomen amor, y

allende desto se fagan Cristianos;—que se inclinan al amor e servicio de sus Altezas, y de toda la nacion Castellana; e procuran de ajuntar de nos dar de las cosas que tienen en abundancia, que nos son necessarias. Y no conocian ninguna seta nin idolatria, salvo que todos creen que las fuerças y el bien es en el cielo; y creian muy firme que yo, con estos navios y gente, venia del cielo; y en tal acatamiento me recebian en todo cabo, despues de haver perdido el miedo. Y esto no procede porque sean ignorantes, —salvo de muy sotil ingenio; y onbres que navegan todas aquellas mares, que es maravilla la buena cuenta qu' ellos dan de todo— salvo porque nunca vieron gente vestida ni semejantes navios. Y luego que llegué á las Indias, en la primera isla que hallé, tomé por fuerza algunos dellos para que deprendiesen y me diesen noticia de lo que avia en aquellas partes; e asi fue que luego entendieron y nos á ellos, quando por lengua o señas. Y estos han aprovechado mucho. Oy en dia los traigo, que siempre estan de proposito que vengo del cielo, por mucha conversacion que ayan havido conmigo. Y estos eran los primeros à pronunciarlo donde yo llegava, y los otros andavan corriendo de casa en casa, y a las villas cercanas, con vozes altas: Venid! venid á ver la gente del cielo. Asi todos, honbres como mugeres, despues de haver el corazon seguro de nos, venian, que no quedavan grande ni pequeño, y todos trayan algo de comer y de bever que davan con un amor maravilloso. Ellos tienen [en] todas las yslas muy muchas canoas á manera de fustas de remo, dellas maiores, dellas menores, y algunas y muchas son mayores que una fusta de diez e ocho bancos. No son tan anchas porque son de un solo madero, mas una fusta no terná con ellas al remo porque van que no es cosa de creer; y con estas navegan todas aquellas islas que son innumerables, y tratan sus mercaderías. Algunas destas canoas he visto con lxx y lxxx [h]onbres en ella, y cada uno con su remo. En todas estas islas no vide mucha diversidad de la fechura de la gente, ni en las costumbres, ni en la lengua salvo que todos se entienden; que es cosa muy singular para lo que espero que determinaran sus Altezas para la conversacion dellos de nuestra santa fe, á la qual son muy dispuestos. Ya dixe como yo havia andado cvii leguas por la costa de la mar, por la derecha

linea de Occidente á Oriente, por la isla Juana; segun el qual camino puedo decir que esta isla es maior que Inglaterra y Escocia juntas; porque, allende destas cvii leguas, me queda de la parte de Poniente dos provincias que yo no he andado,—la una de las quales llaman Avan, donde nacen la gente con cola—las quales provincias no pueden tener en longura menos de l ó lx leguas, segun puedo entender destos Indios qu[e] yo tengo, los quales saben todas las yslas. Esta otra Española en cierco tiene mas que la España toda desde Co[libre en Cata]luña por costa de mar fasta Fuenteravia en Viscaya; pues en una quadra anduve clxxxviii grandes leguas por recta linea de Occident[e] á Oriente. Esta es para desear; e v[ista] es para nunca dexar. En la qual, —puesto [que de to]das tenga tomada possession por sus Altezas, y todas sean mas abastadas de lo que yo sé y puedo dezir y todas las tengo por de sus Altezas quales dellas pueden disponer como y tan conplidame[n]te como de los reynos de Castilla—en esta Española, en el lugar mas convenible y meior comarca para las minas del oro, y de todo trato asi de la tierra firme de acá, como de aquella de allá del gran Can, donde havrá grand trato e ganancia, he tomado possession de una villa grande, á la qual puse nonbre la villa de Navidad; y en ella he fecho fuerza y fortaleza—que ya á estas horas estará del todo acabada—y he dexado en ella gente que basta para semejante fecho, con armas y artellarias, e vituallas por mas de un año, y fusta y maestro de la mar en todas artes para fazer otras: y grand amistad con el Rey de aquella tierra en tanto grado que se preciava de me llamar y tener por hermano. E aunque le mudase la voluntad á offender esta gente, el ni los suios no saben que sean armas, y andan desnudos. Como ya he dicho, son los mas temerosos que ay en el mundo; asi que solamente la gente que allá queda es para destruir toda aquella tierra; y es ysla sin peligro de sus personas sabiendo se regir. En todas estas islas me parece que todos los [h]onbres sean contentos con una muger, i a su maioral, ó rey, dan fasta veynte. Las mugeres me parece que trabaxan mas que los [h]onbres. Ni he podido entender si tenian bienes propios; que me pareció ver que aquello que uno tenia, todos hazian parte, en especial de las cosas comederas. En estas islas, fasta aqui, no

he hallado [h]onbres monstruos, como muchos pensavan; mas antes es toda gente de muy lindo acatamiento, ni son negros como en Guinea, salvo con sus cabellos correntios; y no se crian donde ay inpeto demasiado de los rayos solares. Es verdad qu' el sol tiene alli grand fuerça puesto que es distinta de la linea equinocial veinte e seis grados. En estas islas donde ay montañas grandes, ahi tenia fuerça el frio este ynvierno; mas ellos lo sufren por la costumbre con la ayuda de las viandas que comen con especias muchas y muy calientes en demasía. Asi que monstruos no he hallado, ni noticia, salvo de una ysla que es aqui la segunda á la entrada de las Yndias, que es poblada de una gente que tienen en todas las yslas por muy ferozes, los quales comen carne humana. Estos tienen muchas canoas con las quales corren todas las yslas de India, roban y toman quanto pueden. Ellos no son mas difformes que los otros, salvo que tienen en costumbre de traer los cabellos largos como mugeres, y usan arcos y flechas de las mismas armas de cañas con un palillo al cabo por defecto de fierro que no tienen. Son ferozes entre estos otros pueblos que son en demasiado grado cobardes, mas yo no los tengo en nada mas que á los otros. Estos son aquellos que tratan con las mugeres de Matinino, que es la primera ysla partiendo d'España para las Indias que se falla; en la qual no ay honbre ninguno. Ellas no usan exercicio femenil, salvo arcos y flechas, como los sobre dichos de cañas; y se arman y cobijan con laminas de arambre de que tienen mucho. Otra ysla me aseguran mayor que la Española en que las personas no tienen ningun cabello. En esta ay oro sin cuento, y destas y de las otras traigo co[n]migo Indios para testimonio. E[n] conclusion, á fablar desto solamente que sea fecho este viage que fue asi de cor[r]ida, que pueden ver sus Altezas q[ue] yo les daré oro quanto [h]ovieren menester, con muy poquita ayuda que sus Altezas me daran; agora [e]speciaria y algodon quanto sus Altezas mandaran cargar, y almastica quanta mandaran cargar—e de la qual fasta [h]oy no se ha fallado salvo en Grecia en la ysla de Xio, y el Señorio la vende como quiere —; y lignumaloe quanto mandaran cargar, y esclavos quantos mandaran cargar,—y seran de los ydólatras; y creo haver fallado ruybarbo y canela. E otras mil cosas de sustancia fallare que havran fallado

la gente que yo allá dexo. Porque yo no me he detenido [en] ningun cabo en quanto el viento me aya dado lugar de navegar; solamente en la villa de Navidad en quanto dexé asegurado e bien asentado. E á la verdad mucho mas ficiera si los navios me sirvieran como razon demandava. Esto es harto: y [*gracias á ?*] eterno Dios nuestro Señor el qual da á todos aquellos que andan su camino victoria de cosas que parecen imposibles—y esta señaladamente fue la una; porque aunque destas tierras ayan fablado ó escripto, todo va por conjectura sin alegar de vista; salvo comprendiendo á tanto que los oyentes los mas escuchavan e juzgavan mas por fabla que por poca cosa dello. Asi que pues nuestro Redemtor dió esta victoria a nuestros illustrisimos Rey e Reyna, e á s[us] reynos famosos, de tan alta cosa, donde toda la Christiandad deve tomar alegria, y fazer grandes fiestas, y dar gracias solennes á la sancta Trinidad, con muchas oraciones solennes por el tanto enxalçamiento que havran en tornandose tantos pueblos á nuestra sancta fe, y despues por los bienes temporales que no solamente á la España mas á todos los Christianos, ternan aqui refrigerio y ganancia. Esto segun el fecho, asi en breve.

Fecha en la caravela sobre las yslas de Canaria á xv de Febrero, año Mil. cccclxxxxiii.

Fará lo que mandareys.

El Almirante.

Nema que venia dentro en la carta.

Despues desto escripto, estando en mar de Castilla, salió tanto viento conmigo, sul y sueste, que me ha fecho descargar los navios; pero cor[r]i aqui en este puerto de Lisbona [h]oy, que fue la mayor maravilla del mundo, donde acordé escrivir á sus Altezas. En todas las Yndias he siempre hallado los temporales como en Mayo. Adonde yo fuy en xxxiii dias, y volvi en xxviii, salvo qu' estas tormentas me[h]an detenido xxiii dias corriendo por esta mar. Dizen acá todos los honbres de la mar q[ue] jamás [h]ovo tan mal ynvierno, no ni tantas perdidas de naves.

Fecha á quatorze dias de Marzo.

Esta carta enbió Colom al Escrivano de Racion, de las Islas halladas en las Indias, contenida á otra de sus Altezas.

Note.

The preceding letter is on two folio leaves, or four pages, of which page 1 has forty-seven lines, page 2 forty-eight lines, page 3 forty-seven, and page 4 sixteen lines. The extra line on page 2 is almost illegible and seems to have undergone an attempt at obliteration by the printer himself. Its substance (with two small variations) is repeated on the first line of page 3. The Letter has no external mark of the date of impression, or of the place where it was printed. However, as already stated, the typographical character enables us to assert that Juan de Rosenbach printed it at Barcelona. The assertion is rendered conclusive by a number of Catalanisms in spelling which disfigure the text, and expose the hand of a Catalonian type-setter.

Four leaves of contemporary paper are stitched with it, and have been no doubt its companions for nearly four hundred years. Of those four leaves the first and second are glued together, and the whole four, as we may perceive from looking at the first of them, have served as "end-paper" and "fly-leaves" in a book in which the Letter was preserved from the year 1497 until some curious hand extracted it. There is writing on all the four leaves. The matter which fills the third and fourth was written evidently in Bruges in 1497; the matter contained in the first and second (pp. 1-3) is in the same hand, but has a direct Spanish interest.

The latter is a life of Saint Leocadia who was martyred in Toledo in A.D. 304. It is headed thus:

Incipit Confessio Sancte Leochade Virginis qu obiit in civitate Tholetana sub ydus Decembris sub Dätiano preside.

The first words of the text are: "In temporibus illis dum post corporeum Salvatoris adventum."

The other two leaves are less imperfect than those, and are endorsed

App ° intposita p. dnm Archiducem ad habitum Concilium.

It is a rather important document,—the Appellatio or Appeal presented to the Archduke Philip sitting in public court in his hall at Bruges, on the 12th May, 1497, by Johannes Rousselli, Lord of Hernetes, Procurator General or Fiscal of his Highness, against the harsh and exorbitant imposition of imperial taxes upon the people of the Low Countries. The mode adopted by certain tyrannical officials to increase the revenue (and benefit themselves both directly and indirectly) by enhancing levies and forestalment of dues, had terribly injured

the states and caused many persons to fly the country. Even the rightful heads of ecclesiastical foundations had been in many places ejected by ignorant and avaricious strangers; and the condition of things called for such resistance to tyranny as St. Paul had prescribed.—Redress of grievances was promised by the Archduke. His pledge and the proceedings of the Council were witnessed in this formal document by

Gerardus Numan, Audientiarius,
Laurentius de Blitil, Grifiarius Ordinis Velleris,
Johannes de Longavilla
Bartholomeus Le Fevre
Hugo Le Cocq
Johannes Le Borgne
} ordinary Secretaries,

and many other counsellors and secretaries whose names are not given.

In connexion with this curious adjunct to the unique Columbus letter, we may state that the Archduke Philip and his consort Juana visited Toledo in 1502, and presented to the Cathedral, *una reliquia grande de la gloriosa Vírgen Leocadia, Padrona de aquella ciudad*. This statement, taken from the *Primacia de Toledo* of Castegon y Fonseca, printed in 1645, helps to account for the conjunction of the Leocadia legend and the Bruges Council decree in the manuscript leaves prefixed to the Columbus letter.

This is a suitable occasion to mention the fact that the letter here given in facsimile was in my possession for over two years, but has now taken a permanent resting-place in the fittest home that could be found for it. It forms part of the treasures in the great Lenox library of New York, where it will be carefully preserved as the first printed document relating to the New World.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

OF

THE FIRST EDITION OF COLUMBUS' SPANISH LETTER TO LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL.

SIR,

As I know that you will have pleasure of the great victory which our Lord hath given me in my voyage, I write you this, by which you shall know that, in *twenty*[1] days I passed over to the Indies with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Lords, gave me: where I found very many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number. And, of them all, I have taken possession for their Highnesses, with proclamation and the royal standard displayed; and I was not gainsaid. On the first which I found, I put the name Sant Salvador, in commemoration of His high Majesty, who marvellously hath given[2] all this: the Indians call it Guanaham.[3] The second I named the Island of Santa Maria de Concepcion, the third Ferrandina, the fourth, *Fair Island*,[4] the fifth La Isla Juana; and so for each one a new name. When I reached Juana, I followed its coast westwardly, and found it so large that I thought it might be the mainland province of Cathay. And as I did not thus find any towns and villages on the sea-coast, save small hamlets with the people whereof I could not get speech, because they all fled away forthwith, I went on further in the same direction, thinking I should not miss of great cities or towns. And at the end of many leagues, seeing that there was no change, and that the coast was bearing me northwards,

[1] *veinte*, typographical blunder for *xxxiii*. It is corrected in the Ambrosian quarto.

[2] *Andado* in text, blunder for *ha dado*.

[3] *Guanaham*, blunder for *Guanahani*.

[4] *Isla bella*, blunder for *Isabela*.

whereunto my desire was contrary since the winter was already confronting us,[1] I formed the purpose of making from thence to the South, and as the wind also blew against me, I determined not to wait for other weather and turned back as far as a port agreed upon; from which I sent two men into the country to learn if there were a king, or any great cities. They travelled for three days, and found innumerable small villages and a numberless population, but nought of ruling authority; wherefore they returned. I understood sufficiently from other Indians whom I had already taken, that this land, in its continuousness, was an island; and so I followed its coast eastwardly for a hundred and seven leagues as far as where it terminated; from which headland I saw another island to the east, ten *or*[2] eight leagues distant from this, to which I at once gave the name La Spañola. And I proceeded thither, and followed the northern coast, as with La Juana, eastwardly for a hundred and *seventy*[3]-eight great leagues in a direct easterly course, as with La Juana. The which, and all the others, are most strong[4] to an excessive degree, and this extremely so. In it, there are many havens on the sea-coast, incomparable with any others that I know in Christendom, and plenty of rivers so good and great that it is a marvel. The lands thereof are high, and in it are very many ranges of hills, and most lofty mountains incomparably beyond the Island of Centrefrei;[5] all most beautiful in a thousand shapes, and all accessible, and full of trees of a thousand kinds, so lofty that they seem to reach the sky. And I am assured that they never lose their foliage; as may be imagined, since I saw them as green and as beautiful as they are in Spain during May. And some of them were in flower, some in fruit, some in another stage according to their kind. And the nightingale was singing, and other birds of a thousand sorts, in the month of November, round about the way that I was going. There are palm-trees of six or eight species, wondrous to see for their

[1] *Encarnado* in original for *encarado* or *encarando*.
[2] Ten or eight (diez o ocho) ought to be eighteen (diez e ocho).
[3] Should be "eighty."
[4] Fortissimos, should be fertilisimos: most fertile.
[5] Ought to be Tenerife.

beautiful variety; but so are the other trees, and fruits, and plants therein. There are wonderful pine-groves, and very large plains of verdure, and there is honey, and many kinds of birds, and many various fruits. In the earth there are many mines of metals; and there is a population of incalculable number. Española is a marvel; the mountains and hills, and plains, and fields, and the soil, so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of all sorts, for building of towns and villages. There could be no believing, without seeing, such harbours as are here, as well as the many and great rivers, and excellent waters, most of which contain gold. In the trees and fruits and plants, there are great diversities from those of Juana. In this,[1] there are many spiceries, and great mines of gold and other metals. The people of this island, and of all the others that I have found and seen, or not seen,[2] all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bring them forth; although some women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant, or a cotton something which they make for that purpose. They have no iron or steel, nor any weapons; nor are they fit thereunto; not because they be not a well-formed people and of fair stature, but that they are most wondrously timorous.[3] They have no other weapons than the stems of reeds in their seeding state, on the end of which they fix little sharpened stakes. Even these, they dare not use; for many times has it happened that I sent two or three men ashore to some village to parley, and countless numbers of them sallied forth, but as soon as they saw those approach, they fled away in such wise that even a father would not wait for his son. And this was not because any hurt had ever done to any of them:—on the contrary, at every headland where I have gone and been able to hold speech with them, I gave them of everything which I had, as well cloth as many other things, without accepting aught therefor—; but such they are, incurably timid. It is true that since they have become more assured, and are losing that terror, they are artless and generous with what they have, to such

[1] *i.e.* Hispaniola.

[2] y havido ni aya havido noticia.

[3] A few lines are a little defective, and portions of words lost.

a degree as no one would believe but him who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for,[1] they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts. And whether it be a thing of value, or one of little worth, they are straightways content with whatsoever trifle of whatsoever kind may be given them in return for it. I forbade that anything so worthless as fragments of broken platters, and pieces of broken glass, and strap-buckles, should be given them; although when they were able to get such things, they seemed to think they had the best jewel in the world, for it was the hap of a sailor to get, in exchange for a strap, gold to the weight of two and a half castellanos, and others much more for other things of far less value; while for new blancas[2] they gave everything they had, even though it were [the worth of] two or three gold castellanos, or one or two arrobas[3] of spun cotton. They took even pieces of broken barrel-hoops, and gave whatever they had, like senseless brutes; insomuch that it seemed to me ill. I forbade it, and I gave gratuitously a thousand useful things that I carried, in order that they may conceive affection, and furthermore may be made[4] Christians; for they are inclined to the love and service of their Highnesses and of all the Castilian nation, and they strive to combine in giving us things which they have in abundance, and of which we are in need.[5] And they knew no sect, nor idolatry; save that they all believe that power and goodness are in the sky, and they believed very firmly that I, with these ships and crews, came from the sky; and in such opinion, they received me at every place where I landed, after they had lost their terror. And this comes not because they are ignorant: on the contrary, they are men of very subtle wit, who navigate all those seas, and who give a marvellously good account of everything—but because they never saw men wearing clothes nor the

[1] pidiendogela, for pidiendosela.

[2] Copper-coins.

[3] An arroba = 25 lbs.

[4] se faran. for *se fazan*, or se fagan.

[5] This sentence continues to be subjunctive after the word "Christians," in the Sanchez-letter of Varnhagen, and the word *aiuntar*, here translated "combine" is there *ayudar* = to aid.

like of our ships. And as soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island that I found, I took some of them by force, to the intent that they should learn [our speech] and give me information of what there was in those parts. And so it was, that very soon they understood [us] and we them, what by speech or what by signs; and those [Indians] have been of much service. To this day I carry them [with me] who are still of the opinion that I come from heaven [as appears] from much conversation which they have had with me. And they were the first to proclaim it wherever I arrived; and the others went running from house to house and to the neighbouring villages, with loud cries of "Come! come to see the people from heaven!" Then, as soon as their minds were reassured about us, every one came, men as well as women, so that there remained none behind,[1] big or little; and they all brought something to eat and drink, which they gave with wondrous lovingness. They have in[2] all the islands very many canoes, after the manner of rowing-galleys, some larger, some smaller; and a good many are larger than a galley of eighteen benches. They are not so wide, because they are made of a single log of timber, but a galley could not keep up with them in rowing, for their motion is a thing beyond belief. And with these, they navigate through all those islands which are numberless, and ply their traffic. I have seen some of those canoes with seventy, and eighty, men in them, each one with his oar. In all those islands, I saw not much diversity in the looks of the people, nor in their manners and language; but they all understand each other, which is a thing of singular towardness for what I hope their Highnesses will determine, as to making them conversant with our holy faith, unto which they are well disposed. I have already told how I had gone a hundred and seven leagues, in a straight line from West to East, along the sea-coast of the Island of Juana; according to which itinerary, I can declare that that island is larger than England and Scotland combined; as, over and above those hundred and seven leagues, there remains for me, on the western side, two provinces whereto I did not go—one of which they call

[1] *cadavan* for *quedaban*. [2] *en* omitted.

Avan, where the people are born with tails—which provinces cannot be less in length than fifty or sixty leagues, according to what may be understood from the Indians with me, who know all the islands. This other, Española, has a greater circumference than the whole of Spain from Col*ibre in Catal*unya,[1] by the sea-coast, as far as Fuente Ravia in Biscay; since, along one of its four sides, I went for a hundred and eighty-eight great leagues in a straight line from West to East. This is [a land] to be desired,—and once seen,[2] never to be relinquished—in which (—although, indeed, I have taken possession of them all[3] for their Highnesses, and all are more richly endowed than I have skill and power to say, and I hold them all in the name of their Highnesses who can dispose thereof as much and as completely as of the kingdoms of Castile—) in this Española, in the place most suitable and best for its proximity to the gold mines, and for traffic with the continent, as well on this side as on the further side of the Great Can, where there will be great commerce and profit,—I took possession of a large town which I named the city of Navidad.[4] And I have made fortification there, and a fort (which by this time will have been completely finished) and I have left therein men enough for such a purpose, with arms and artillery, and provisions for more than a year, and a boat, and a [man who is] master of all sea-craft for making others; and great friendship with the King of that land, to such a degree that he prided himself on calling and holding me as his brother. And even though his mind might change towards attacking those men, neither he nor his people know what arms are, and go naked. As I have already said, they

[1] The eleven letters in italics are omitted from the text.

[2] The word *vista* deficient in consequence of a hole in the paper.

[3] A few letters deficient in consequence of the paper being torn. It is curious that the words from "have skill." down to "as com[pletely]" are printed twice. In the first instance, the line which comprises them is extra-regular at the bottom of page 2, and is so blurred and broken that its duplicate presentation (with a slight variant) at the top of page 3, seems to be a deliberate repetition.

[4] *Navidad* is the same as *Natividad*: he reached the spot on Christmas-day, 1492.

are the most timorous creatures there are in the world, so that the men who remain there are alone sufficient to destroy all that land, and the island is without personal danger for them if they know how to behave themselves. It seems to me that in all those islands, the men are all content with a single wife; and to their chief or king they give as many as twenty. The women, it appears to me, do more work than the men. Nor have I been able to learn whether they held personal property, for it seemed to me that whatever one had, they all took share of, especially of eatable things. Down to the present, I have not found in those islands any monstrous men, as many expected, but on the contrary all the people are very comely; nor are they black like those in Guinea, but have flowing hair; and they are not begotten where there is an excessive violence of the rays of the sun. It is true that the sun is there very strong, notwithstanding that it is twenty-six degrees[1] distant from the equinoctial line. In those islands, where there are lofty mountains, the cold was very keen there, this winter; but they endure it by being accustomed thereto, and by the help of the meats which they eat with many and inordinately hot spices. Thus I have not found, nor had any information of monsters, except of an island which is here[2] the second in the approach to the Indies, which is inhabited by a people whom, in all the islands, they regard as very ferocious, who eat human flesh. These have many canoes with which they run through all the islands of India, and plunder and take as much as they can. They are no more ill-shapen than the others, but have the custom of wearing their hair long, like women; and they use bows and arrows of the same reed-stems, with a point of wood at the top, for lack of iron which they have not. Amongst those other tribes who are excessively cowardly, these are ferocious; but I hold them as nothing more than the others. These are they who have to do with the women of Matremonio[3]—which is the first island that is encountered in the passage from Spain to the Indies—in

[1] Instead of *grados* = degrees, the text has (by a typographical error) *grãdes*.
[2] The word *en* = in precedes "the second" in the text.
[3] So in the text; it should be Matinino.

which there are no men. Those women practise no female usages, but have bows and arrows of reed such as above mentioned; and they arm and cover themselves with plates of copper of which they have much. In another island, which they assure me is larger than Española, the people have no hair. In this, there is incalculable gold; and concerning these and the rest I bring Indians with me as witnesses. And in conclusion, to speak only of what has been done in this voyage, which has been so hastily performed, their Highnesses may see that I shall give them as much gold as they may need, with very little aid which their Highnesses will give me; spices and cotton at once, as much as their Highnesses will order to be shipped, and as much as they shall order to be shipped of mastic,—which till now has never been found except in Greece, in the island of Xio,[1] and the Seignory[2] sells it for what it likes; and aloe-wood as much as they shall order to be shipped; and slaves as many as they shall order to be shipped,—and these shall be from idolators. And I believe that I have discovered rhubarb and cinnamon, and I shall find that the men whom I am leaving there will have discovered a thousand other things of value; as I made no delay at any point, so long as the wind gave me an opportunity of sailing, except only in the town of Navidad till I had left things safely arranged and well established. And in truth I should have done much more if the ships had served me as well as might reasonably have been expected. This is enough; and [thanks to] eternal God our Lord who gives to all those who walk His way, victory over things which seem impossible; and this was signally one such, for although men have talked[3] or written of those lands, it was all by conjecture, without confirmation from eyesight, importing just so much that the hearers for the most part listened and judged that there was more fable in it than anything actual, however trifling. Since thus our Redeemer has given to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their famous kingdoms, this victory in so high a matter, Christendom should take gladness therein and make

[1] Chios, or Scio. Of Genoa.

[3] By a typographical blunder, *fallado* is found in the text, instead of *fablado*.

great festivals, and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity for the great exaltation they shall have by the conversion of so many peoples to our holy faith; and next for the temporal benefit which will bring hither refreshment and profit, not only to Spain, but to all Christians. This briefly, in accordance with the facts. Dated, on the caravel, off the Canary Islands, the 15 February of the year 1493.

At your command,

THE ADMIRAL.

POSTSCRIPT WHICH CAME WITHIN THE LETTER.

After having written this [letter], and being in the sea of Castile, there rose upon me so much wind, South and South-West, that it has caused me to lighten the vessels, however, I ran hither to-day into this port of Lisbon, which was the greatest wonder in the world; where I decided to write to their Highnesses. I have always found the seasons like May in all the Indies, whither I passed in thirty-three days, and returned in twenty-eight, but that these storms have delayed me twenty-three days running about this sea. All the seamen say here that there never has been so bad a winter, nor so many shipwrecks.

Dated the 14th of March.

Columbus sent this letter to the Escrivano de Racion. Of the islands found in the Indies. Received with another for their Highnesses.

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